

point, so the indocile and recusant auditor became unable to think on the subject without adverting immediately to the narrow illustration of it exhibited by this one man ; insomuch that this image of combined penury and conceit became established in his mind as representative of the subject. In consequence of this connexion of ideas, he perhaps became disinclined to think on the subject at all; or, if he was disposed or constrained to think of it, he was so averse to let his views of Christianity thus converge to the littleness of a point, that he laboured to expand them till they lost all specifically evangelical distinctions in the wideness of generality and abstraction.

Again, the majority of Christians are precluded, by their condition in life, from any considerable acquirement of general knowledge. It would be unpardonable in the more cultivated man not to make the large allowance for the natural effect of this on the extent of their religious ideas. But it shall have happened, that he has met with numbers who had no inconsiderable means, both in the way of money, judging by their unnecessary expenses, and of leisure, judging by the quantity of time consumed in trivial talk, or in needless sleep, to furnish their minds with various information, but who were quite on a level, in this respect, with those of the humblest rank. They never even suspected that knowledge could have any connexion with religion; or that they could not be as clearly and comprehensively in possession of the great subject as a man whose faculties had been exercised, and whose extended acquaintance with things would supply an ample diversity of ideas illustrative of religion. He has perhaps even heard them make a kind of merit of their indifference to knowledge, as if it were the proof or the result of a higher value for religion. If there was ventured a hint of reprehensive wonder at their reading so little, and within so very confined a scope, it would be replied, that they thought it enough to read the Bible ; as if it were possible for a person whose mind fixes with inquisitive attention on what is before him, to read through the Bible without thousands of such questions being started in his thoughts, as can be answered only from sources of information extraneous to the Bible. But he perceived that this reading the Bible was no work of inquiring thought; and indeed he has commonly found, that those who have no wish for anything like a